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#### MACKINDER'S EAGLE OWL FEEDING ON BATS

An early morning visit to the Kitum cave on Mt Elgon, Kenya, resulted in a fascinating observation. At approximately 08:30 on 30 August 1983 Glen and Richard Matthews, Craig Sholley and I approached this famed elephant cave. When within about 100 m of the mouth of the cave we sighted a Mackinder's Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis mackinderi* perched on the large boulders at the mouth of the cave. While we stood observing the bird through binoculars, it flew into the cave. We assumed it was seeking shelter for the daylight hours. We proceeded towards and then into the cave. Immediately upon entering the cave, an eagle owl flew out of the cave past us. As the bird passed within a metre or so of us it was easily observed to be carrying a bat, apparently taken in the depths of the cave. We then sought out the point of rock on which it had been resting upon our sighting it.

On top of this rock we found five bat wings, of between 15 and 20 cm in length. Upon examining the cave, we found it to contain a large population of bats of what appeared to be at least two species. We were, however, unable to identify these without closer inspection. These observations suggest diurnal hunting and feeding by the Mackinder's Eagle Owl in the daytime darkness of the cave, preying on the roosting bats.

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#### ROOSTING BEHAVIOUR OF RED-FACED CROMBEC

One facet of bird behaviour that is very little known is the roosting behaviour of many birds. For example, we have found only one reference to roosting in honeyguides, that being a honeybird juvenile roosting between two foster parents.

On the evening of 13 November 1985 at our camp on Ol Ari Nyiro Ranch, Laikipia plateau, Kenya, our attention was focussed on several interacting Common Bulbuls *Pycnonotus barbatus* calling loudly. While watching them we noted a Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii* feeding in the gathering darkness (time 18:38). We watched the crombec move along several branches, then to a little olive branchlet over our car's track, at 2.5 m above ground. There it darted about, catching insects among the petioles of leaves. Suddenly, at 18:40 it ceased moving and simply perched. We checked it quietly by torchlight at 19:00, 20:00 and 21:00 and indeed found it roosting there.

It was in its roosting position fully by 19:00 and did not shift from this all night. Facing east, its head appeared to be tucked under its left wing, and its feathers erected to form almost a round fluffy ball (especially with the tiny tail virtually covered by the projecting feathers). Even its feet were covered completely. Presumably the down feathers were adjusted to hold the inner air layer tightly, with the contour feathers erected (which would allow greater penetration of air toward the body, but the contour feathers may trap the upper air layer to act as outer insulation). The erected feathers usually allow air to reach the body, cooling the bird, but presumably the down feathers beneath are then erected also. In any case this posture and erect plumage were maintained through the night and from 05:00 to 06:00 on 14 November. The bird moved and depressed its feathers, raising its head at 06:00; it sat for nearly two minutes, then at 06:02 it flew down to a bush and began gleaning insects. Gradually it worked about, feeding voraciously, reaching the top of an *Acacia gerrardi* at 06:25; from there it sang five renditions of its primary song, thus presumably it was a male. The primary song is a melodic, whistling warbled *witch-eee, witch-eee witch-eee-eeee*, sometimes longer, recalling closely the buzzy song of the North American wood warbler, the Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (the alternate, or secondary song, possibly restricted to females, is a more melodic, complex warble; occasionally there is a third 'song', a trill).

To our surprise, what was presumably the same bird came to exactly the same spot to roost on 14 November at 18:41, and it did not raise its head out of the ball of fluffy feathers until 06:07 on 15th. It peered around sleepily for 7 minutes before 'unfluffing' and darting off east to a bush. Its roosting posture and direction were identical to those of the night before. It did not appear there on the (windy) night of 16 November, but it occupied exactly the same roosting site on 17, 18 and 19 November, raising its head at about 06:03-06:08, looking about a minute or two later, and flying off, usually after stretching (one wing and leg), at 06:05-06:15. It also roosted there 17-19 and 21 December.

One wonders at a bird returning to precisely the same roosting site, even to the same place on a given perch, so regularly. Especially favoured sites proven satisfactory by frequent use must afford certain advantages, otherwise it is difficult to explain repetitive